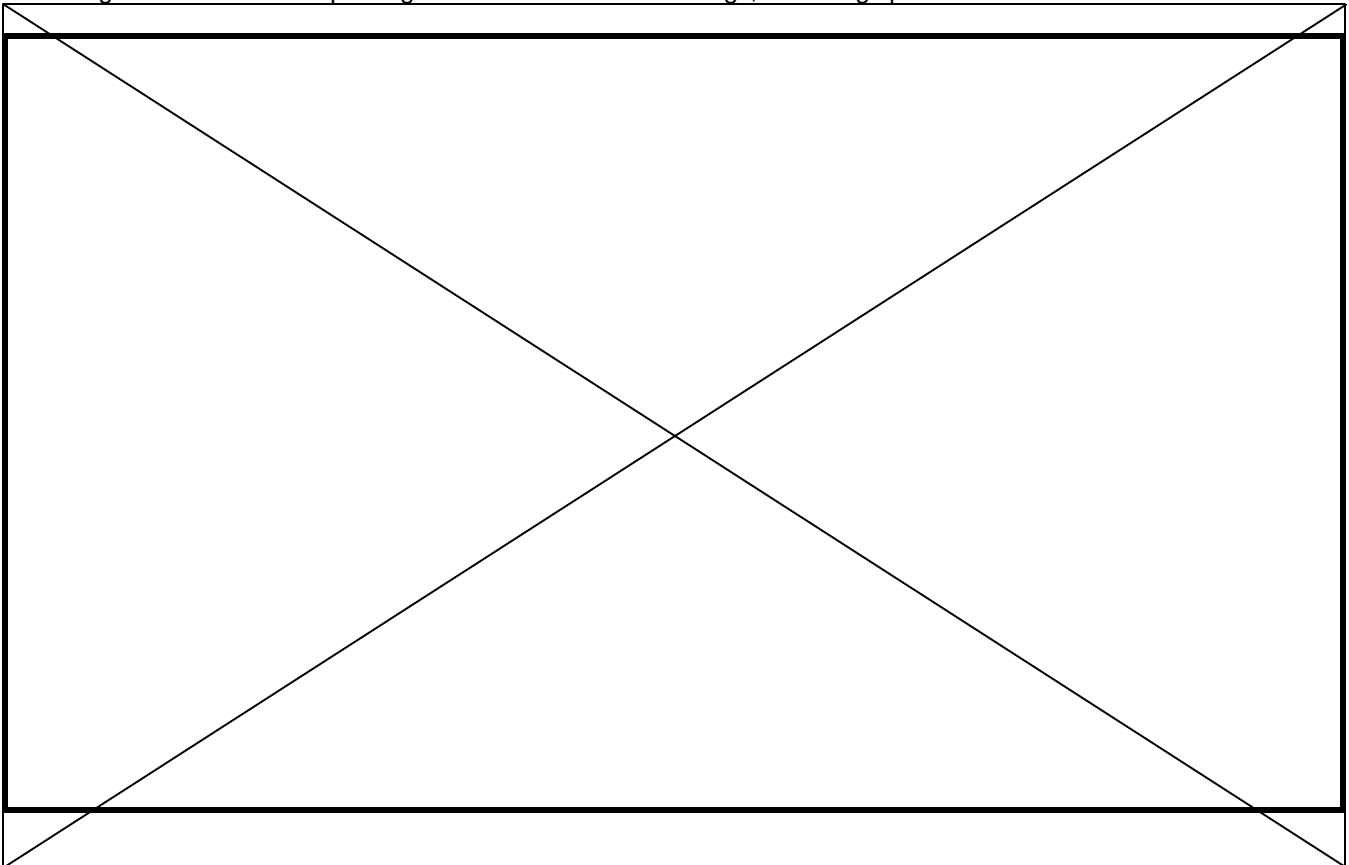


## SOOPER BOWL Statistics

	Assassins	Gunslingers		Assassins	Gunslingers
Rushing Yards	25	130	Yards Per Punt Return	15.0	4.1
Rushing Plays	11	38	Yards Per Kick Return	24.7	0.0
Yards Per Rush	2.3	3.4	Yards Per Turnover	0.0	3.3
Passing Yards	177	369	Touchdowns	0	5
Passing Plays	41	36	Extra Points	0	5
Yards Per Pass	4.3	10.3	Field Goals (No/Atts)	1/2	3/3
Passes(Comp/Atts)	21/38	27/36	Yards Per Field Goal	57.0	39.3
Completion %	0.55	0.75	Safeties	0	0
Sacked	3	0	Penalties (No/Yards)	2/9	0/0
Intercepted	1	1	Total Plays	63	81
Fumbles(No/Lost)	2/0	2/0	Total Time	24:08	35:52
First Downs	9	22			
3rd Down Efficiency	.08	0.62	Total Yards	346	527
Punts	9	4	Total Score	3	44
Yards Per Punt	39.7	40.3			
Net Yards	202	499			

#	Name	Passes	Yds.	AVG	Runs	AVG	Catches	AVG
23	Roland	3/ 3	19	6.3	27/103	3.8	13/261	20.1
10	Stephen King	16/22	273	12.4	1/ -3	-3.0	3/ 35	11.7
31	The Walking Dude	3/ 3	33	11.0	6/ 8	1.3	2/ 34	17.0

This Play of the Month was donated by Mark W. Highsmith, coach of the AOFL Germans. This play is keyed off the fake to the right halfback. The fake is made, then the QB drops off to the left and hits the flanker on a 10 yard out pattern. Note: the right wide receiver coming in where the flanker is pausing. This is to throw off man coverage, and is a legal pick.



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### **SOMETHING, continued from the previous page**

second or two to fool the defense before the pass is thrown.

9) Acting on the above decisions, we'll move the offensive linemen to cover the quarterback during the diversion and the pass. In this play, when the tempo is quick, a tight formation for the OL is often better.

10) Now we will move the flanker into the best position to strike at his sideline target—we need a quick tempo, so he's moved underneath the target, but off of the LOS in the slot, because in man coverage, the farthest defensive back from the LOS covers the farthest back eligible receiver. This will give the receiver the extra time he needs to outmaneuver the DB.

11) We've chosen the HB to take a diversionary fake hand-off to the middle, so we'll line him up in the middle of the backfield.

12) Let's move in the strong side split end to pull the strong side cornerback away from the corner, and open the corner at 10 yards deep for the flanker to catch the ball. The other players not yet assigned may be placed wherever, but we'd like to move in the fullback to further convince the defense that the play will be a middle running play.

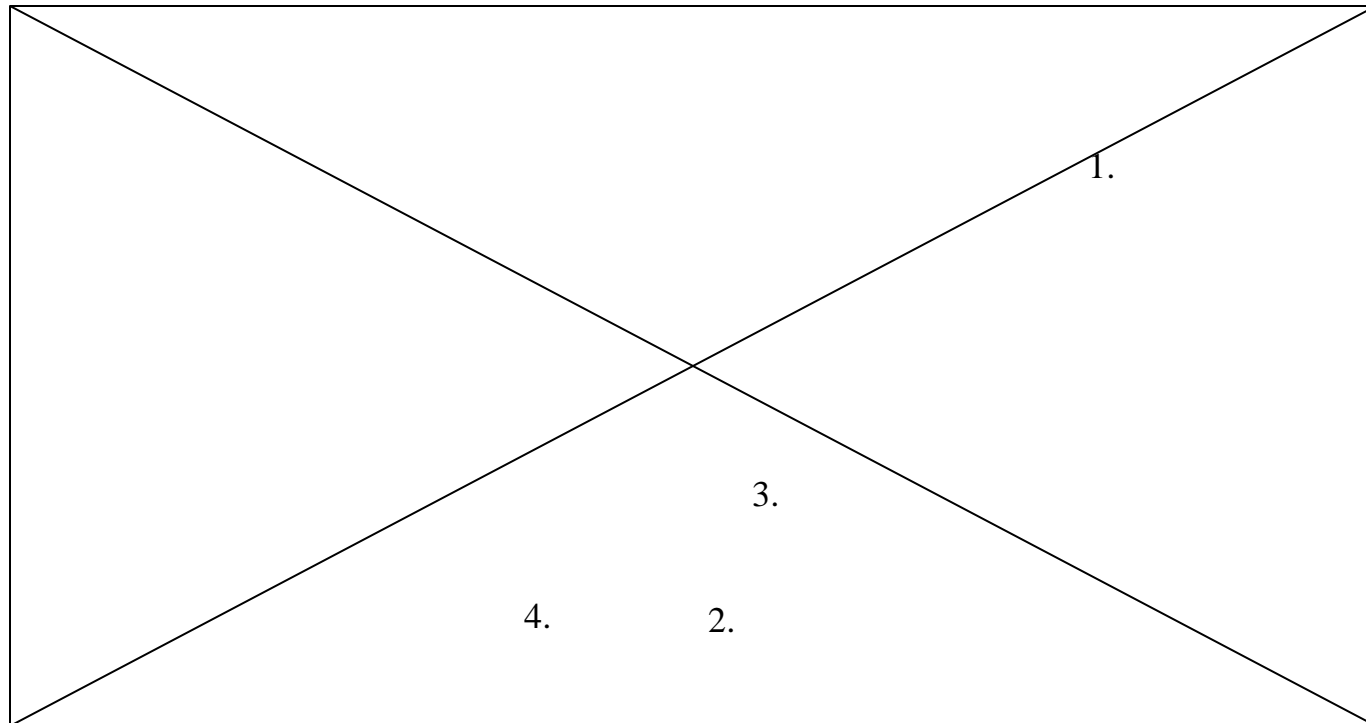
13) Finally, we'll move the quarterback to the most advan-

tageous position, one which will protect him from being sacked as he executes the fake hand-off. Let's place him directly behind the center, but 6 yds. deep, for a shotgun snap.

14) We've already made a step to negate the zone by faking a hand-off, and we can try to negate man coverage by running a difficult-to-follow pass route towards the sideline and/or using a crossing pattern with a split end. But for this play, let's use a dash-in-pause-dash-out pattern, aiming to place the receiver between the defender and the QB. The QB will take the snap and throw to the flanker, but first he will fake the hand-off to the HB, who should be routed as closely as possible to the QB when he executes the fake. Then the QB will wait for the fake to affect the defenders, then pass the ball to the (hopefully) open flanker, 10 yards down the sideline.

15) Now we'll route that SE on the sideline to pull off the cornerback, by crossing the flanker's pattern at the pause location, leaving the flanker wide open to receive the pass.

That all appears rather lengthy, but in reality, it is fairly quick. The slow part of play design is testing and fine tuning. But if you find yourself having trouble coming up with new plays, use the above system to move from nothing to something.



This is Mark W. Highsmith's Play of the Month, Flanker Sideline in action. 1. The flanker's finishing his diagrammed route by heading for the corner about ten yards deep. 2. The quarterback has faked, dropped back and released the ball, note that the path of the ball is towards where the receiver should end up, not where he is now. 3. The halfback who faked taking a handoff is surging into the offensive line ensuring that any defensive player faked out would follow his movements. 4. The left halfback is protecting the quarterback's weak blindside.. This play opens up the flanker underneath the zone and will go in for the touchdown.

# AOFL Results Week 9 Through Sooper Bowl

## Week #9

VISITING	HOME
7 S.Torpedoes	48 Flunkies
6 Germans	121 Comedians
28 Pelicans	63 Gunslingers
94 Jesters	7 Arboreals
28 Pepperonies	33 Falcons
112 Wraiths	0 Hawks
48 Legion	90 Assassins
17 Rebels	27 Whiteskins
33 Impalers	23 W. Rogues
34 mArLeYs	51 Apocalypse

## Week #10

VISITING	HOME
69 Comedians	20 Apocalypse
28 Germans	0 Flunkies
25 Jesters	53 Pelicans
27 Arboreals	38 mArLeYs
33 Pepperonies	3 Hawks
69 Falcons	7 W. Rogues
0 Impalers	38 Assassins
17 Legion	16 Rebels
9 Whiteskins	40 Wraiths
58 Gunslingers	20 S.Torpedoes

## Week #11

### 1st Round of the Playoffs

Germans	20	@	Gunslingers	36
Flunkies	41	@	mArLeYs	35
Impalers	26	@	Falcons	7
Hawks	16	@	Whiteskins	52

## Week #12

### 2nd Round of the Playoffs

Impalers	7	@	Wraiths	20
Whiteskins	6	@	Assassins	47
Flunkies	20	@	Comedians	66
Gunslingers	34	@	Pelicans	21

## Week #13

### 3rd Round of the Playoffs

#### The Conference Championships

Assassins	62	@	Wraiths	31
Gunslingers	31	@	Comedians	30

## Week #14

### !!!THE SOOPER BOWL!!!

GUNSLINGERS	44	@	ASSASSINS	3
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## SOMETHING, continued from page 8

try to fool the defense. Since we're designing the play to be a pass to the sideline, the most effective diversion would probably be to fake a hand-off to the middle, especially if our star halfback is a keyed-on runner. Fake hand-offs should happen as soon as possible in a play, because if the defense sees a slower tempo, they'll read the play as a pass. Still, we won't sacrifice yards for an effective fake—we'll keep that quarterback safe from a sacking.

5) Sometimes, as in this case, the spot to attack is already determined, particularly when the play moves toward the sideline. But, if this were a pass to the center of the field, we might figure out where the receiver would be open, then consider what would need to be done to get him there. Our play's attack area is the strong-side sideline, 10 yards away from the line-of-scrimmage (LOS).

6) We'd like this play to work against anything that the defense might have up its sleeves, so we want to negate zone and man pass coverage, as well as keep the quarterback safe from blitzing defenders.

7) Since this is a pass play, we'll use pass blocking.

8) We've already decided to use a diversion, so we've got a broken flow, designed to confuse the defense. Tempo-wise, the play needs to move quickly, but the diversion needs a

**SOMETHING, continued on the next page**

# PlayMaker News

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# AOFL Season 6 Final Standings

## Conference A

	TEAM	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	PD	PF/g	PA/g
Division 1	Wraiths	11	1	0	0.916	708	134	574	59.00	11.17
	Falcons	5	5	1	0.500	325	382	-57	29.55	34.73
	Hawks	4	7	0	0.364	211	440	-229	19.18	40.00
	Pepperonies	3	6	1	0.350	246	370	-124	24.60	37.00
	Warrior Rogues	3	7	0	0.300	175	425	-250	17.50	42.50
	TEAM	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	PD	PF/g	PA/g
Division 2	Assassins	10	2	1	0.807	627	218	409	48.23	16.77
	Whiteskins	5	6	1	0.458	287	336	-49	23.92	28.00
	Impalers	5	7	0	0.454	230	318	-88	19.17	26.50
	Legion	4	6	0	0.400	253	359	-106	25.30	35.90
	Rebels	3	7	0	0.300	220	361	-141	22.00	36.10

## Conference B

	TEAM	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	PD	PF/g	PA/g
Division 3	Comedians	9	3	0	0.750	665	197	468	55.41	16.42
	Flunkies	7	5	0	0.583	383	290	93	31.92	24.17
	Germans	6	5	0	0.545	227	352	-125	20.64	32.00
	Apocalypse	4	6	0	0.400	250	364	-114	25.00	36.40
	Scarlet Torpedoes	0	10	0	0.000	160	482	-322	16.00	48.20
	TEAM	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	PD	PF/g	PA/g
Division 4	<b>Gunslingers</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.857</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>42.92</b>	<b>19.71</b>
	Pelicans	8	3	0	0.727	420	274	146	38.18	24.91
	mArLeYs	7	4	0	0.636	421	277	144	38.27	25.18
	Jesters	3	7	0	0.300	268	308	-40	26.80	30.80
	Arboreals	0	10	0	0.000	113	647	-534	11.30	64.70

## Welcome To AOFL

by Dave Weissman, coach of the AOFL Assassins

So your grades are slipping (and you thought they couldn't drop much lower!), your dog can't remember the last time you played with him, and you just received your \$82 online bill for last month... Who cares? Welcome to life in the AOFL Playmaker Football League, where participants are lured by the promise of top notch competition, lively chats every Tuesday night, and even the opportunity to debate such noted luminaries as JB (JohnBoy19) and Herr Highsmith (MarkH78) on the finer intricacies of punt coverage strategies.

We're currently finishing our 6th season of competition and have grown to 20 teams under the steady hand of our fearless Commissioners UbaldoB and Pat17.

We play a 10 week regular season schedule capped by the playoffs and ultimately, The Sooper Bowl.

If you think you're ready to test your coaching skills we welcome you to join up for the upcoming season, which will probably get underway sometime in June. Feel free to download some league teams from AOL or contact any of the editors of this newsletter for a sample of what you can expect to face. Hope to see you on the Gridiron soon!

**PMFB2.0  
IsComing!**

# GFL Results Weeks 9-12

## Week #9

Mozarts	10	Seahawks	49
Wolverines	35	Crusaders	10
Hounds of Hell	24	Lightning	15
Thieves	28	Hawks	27
Eruptors	65	Thunder	3
Saints	3	Tigers	52
Nomads	12	Blazers	17
Sackers	14	Whirlwind	31
Norsemen	21	Bengals	24
Choirboys	21	Wreckers	16
Eagles	7	Gabriels	33
Jalapeños	27	Chiefs	7

## Week #10

Gabriels	27	Thieves	10
Thunder	17	Eagles	24
Seahawks	55	Blazers	10
Crusaders	21	Whirlwind	12
Chiefs	14	Tigers	26
Jalapeños	7	Lightning	27
Wreckers	18	Saints	16
Bengals	20	Hawks	26
Choirboys	21	Hounds of Hell	16
Norsemen	0	Eruptors	80
Sackers	42	Mozarts	21
Nomads	20	Wolverines	35

## Week #11

Mozarts	21	Crusaders	20
Wolverines	38	Seahawks	27
Hounds of Hell	7	Tigers	44
Thieves	35	Thunder	13
Hawks	22	Eruptors	24
Saints	20	Lightning	26
Nomads	20	Whirlwind	19
Sackers	28	Blazers	17
Norsemen	16	Eagles	38
Choirboys	3	Chiefs	28
Bengals	7	Gabriels	21
Wreckers	13	Jalapeños	0

## Week #12

Gabriels	54	Blazers	0
Thunder	10	Wolverines	31
Seahawks	23	Nomads	0
Crusaders	24	Sackers	47
Chiefs	26	Hounds of Hell	9
Jalapeños	47	Saints	20
Wreckers	17	Lightning	27
Eagles	14	Thieves	34
Bengals	10	Eruptors	30
Choirboys	6	Tigers	48
Whirlwind	23	Norsemen	15
Hawks	28	Mozarts	16

# CI\$FL Standings

Deltablitz	6 @	Iron Men	35
La Machine	6 @	Weenies	24
WWF	6 @	Panzers	45
Wingsters	0 @	Smashers	39
Brewskies	6 @	DPs	30
Mijas	0 @	Medflies	41

This past week was not a good one for visiting teams. The home team averaged just over 35 points, while giving up an average of 4 points per game.

The Medflies, will meet the division leading DPs the next Sunday! And the Weenies, struggling to get out of the basement will meet the division leading Ironmen. The Iron Men are currently leading the league in points scored, and running a close second for best defense to the Panzers. While on the opposite end of the spectrum, the Wingsters are having a hard time keeping the ball out of their own end zone an the Mijas are having a hard time putting the ball into the end zone.

## Red Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	JN
Iron Men	4	0	0	1.00	188	22	0.90
Deltablitz	2	2	0	0.50	62	112	0.36
La Machine	1	3	0	0.25	59	118	0.33
Weenies	1	3	0	0.25	34	91	0.27

## White Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	JN
Panzers	4	0	0	1.00	153	19	0.89
Smashers	1	2	1	0.38	66	71	0.48
WWF	1	2	1	0.38	78	123	0.39
Wingsters	1	3	0	0.25	78	162	0.33

## Blue Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	JN
DPs	4	0	0	1.00	107	33	0.76
Medflies	3	1	0	0.75	159	35	0.82
Mijas	1	3	0	0.25	24	131	0.15
Brewskies	0	4	0	0.00	46	137	0.25

# GFL Standings as of Week 12

## EFC

	TEAM	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	PD	PF/g	PA/g
North	Gabriels	12	0	0	1.00	365	84	281	30.4	7
	Hawks	7	5	0	0.58	320	196	124	26.7	16.3
	Norsemen	4	8	0	0.33	202	333	-131	16.8	27.8
	Thunder	1	11	0	0.08	139	535	-396	11.6	44.6
Central	Eruptors	10	2	0	0.83	455	199	256	37.9	16.6
	Thieves	7	5	0	0.58	323	283	40	26.9	23.6
	Bengals	6	6	0	0.50	283	274	9	23.6	22.8
	Eagles	4	8	0	0.33	198	39	-195	16.5	32.8
South	Lightning	7	5	0	0.58	300	223	77	25	18.6
	Jalapeños	7	5	0	0.58	268	213	55	22.3	17.8
	Wreckers	6	6	0	0.50	195	197	-2	16.3	16.4
	Saints	0	12	0	0.00	201	402	-201	16.8	33.5

## WFC

	TEAM	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	PD	PF/g	PA/g
North	Seahawks	11	1	0	0.92	617	191	426	51.4	15.9
	Crusaders	5	7	0	0.42	265	401	-136	22.1	33.4
	Sackers	4	8	0	0.33	298	361	-63	24.8	30.1
	Nomads	4	8	0	0.33	209	297	-88	17.4	24.8
Central	Tigers	10	1	1	0.88	401	108	293	33.4	9
	Chiefs	5	6	1	0.46	210	241	-31	17.5	20.1
	Hounds of Hell	4	7	1	0.38	163	255	-92	13.6	21.3
	Choirboys	3	9	0	0.25	164	295	-131	13.7	24.6
South	Wolverines	10	2	0	0.83	330	145	185	27.5	12.1
	Whirlwind	6	5	1	0.54	186	236	-50	15.5	19.7
	Mozarts	5	7	0	0.42	194	279	-85	16.2	23.3
	Blazers	3	9	0	0.25	148	293	-145	12.3	24.4

### SOMETHING, continued from the previous page

1) We need a play that consistently gains about 10 yards (not because of breaking tackles, but by good blocking and/or effective passing patterns or diversions)  
 2) Since it's harder to consistently gain 10 yards on a running play as opposed to a passing play, we'll choose to pass. Plus, since we need this play when our team is playing catch-up, we'll pass to the sideline, keeping the rate of interceptions and sacks much lower, than if we passed to the center of the field. And, since the play need only gain 10 yards, we won't need a long drop for the quarterback, enabling this play to be

used all over the field.

3) Let's say that our star players are the quarterback, the halfback, and the flanker. The quarterback will pass, and the halfback, who is also a probable linebacker-keyed-on runner (in this case), would be a good diversionary player. This leaves the flanker to catch the sideline pass, a play that is especially suited for an quick, agile, and smart (though not necessarily strong) wide receiver.

4) Though diversions take extra time, in which the play could be blown by an aggressive defense, we'll use a diversion to

**SOMETHING, continued on page 11**

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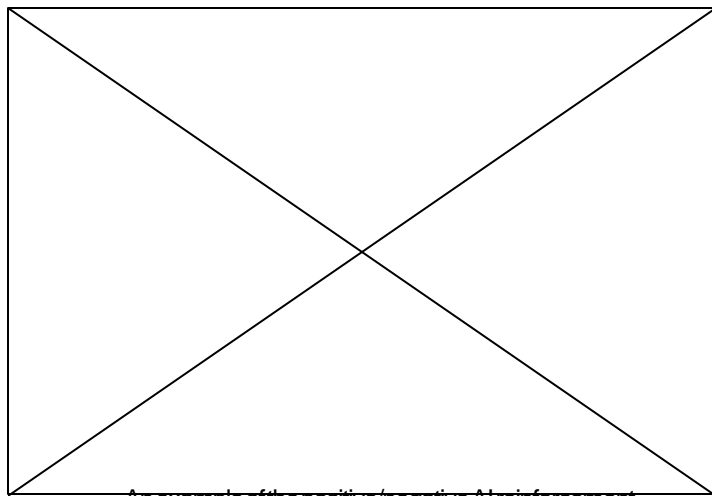
## TIPS, continued from the previous page

10 yards or more. Even if the play gets only 7 out of the 10 yards needed, that leaves you with 4th and 3 to go—a better situation than 4th and 10 when you are trailing late in the 4th quarter!

**Final tweaking.** Now you have the basic playbook which will give your gameplan spontaneity, and hopefully success, on offense. If you have an absolute favorite play e.g. for 3rd and less than 1 yard, or 3rd and more than 20, then include them in the playbook and give them a much higher priority (say 8, if the others are set to 4). There's no guarantee they will be called every time, but unless your play is a real killer you probably don't want it called all the time.

You can also make a special "comeback offense" by setting up some good plays to be called only when you trail by 21 points or more. Just clear the Artificial Intelligence boxes corresponding to minus 21 points or greater from your regular plays, and leave them filled in on your "comeback" plays. This way only your long yardage or special teams plays will be tried when you trail by 21 points. Conversely, you can make "stay ahead" plays which will grind out the clock when you are ahead in the game. Just clear the plus 21 point boxes in the Artificial Intelligence of your regular plays, but leave them filled for your solid running/passing plays. This will result in your team changing offensive strategy as the game situation progresses. Of course, all of these are just suggestions; you may want to pour it on once you are ahead.

And there you have it. A versatile playbook, which will sample your best plays often and with "intelligent" randomness. Actually, I have found that PMFB calls my plays more successfully than me, even though I created the Artificial Intelligence. Humans tend to be biased, hot-headed creatures who act impulsively at times; the computer acts coolly under pressure, and remembers the success/failure of the plays. I hope this has been helpful, and good luck to you all, (but please, not **too** good when your team meets mine!)



An example of the positive/negative A reinforcement.

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# From Nothing To Something

by Mark H. HighSmith, coach of the AOFL Germans

Designing a good offensive play isn't as hard as it seems sometimes, but coming from a veteran, that may sound a little patronizing. Still, everything takes work, though there are keys to play design that some, particularly rookies, may not be aware of. There are at least eight primary steps to design a good play before you even touch the drawing board: 1) plan how many yards you'd like the play to gain, 2) reckon the yards needed with the preferred play type (run for short, pass for long), keeping in mind the risk and implications of a turn-over, particularly with regards to interceptions, sacks, field position, and score difference (e.g., don't drop a quarterback into the endzone on a bomb unless it's time to do or die), 3) scout your team for the best 'horse' for the job of gaining the yards within the above parameters (e.g., strong fullback vs. fast halfback, highly visible tight-end vs. nimble wide receiver), 4) decide whether a diversion (e.g., pump-fake, faked hand-off, reverse, double-pitch, and/or flea-flicker) should be used and to/at whom, 5) plan where the actual attack should happen, 6) ascertain the defense you'd like to crush if possible with this play (flooding zones or man-to-man confusion), 7) figure out what kind of blocking (not 'where' yet) will be needed to determine what the make-up of the offensive line will be, (e.g., using two TEs for heavy running), and finally, 8) consider the tempo and flow of the play, (e.g., a quick flare to the strong side, or a prolonged sweep to the weak side), and judge your teams' offensive capabilities with regards to that answer (e.g., slow offensive guards will be of little use on a quick sweep, but they are often effective draw-play blockers).

When you have answers for the above questions, you're ready to begin actual play design, which consists here of seven more actions: 9) move your offensive line into the positions you think they'll need to set up a blocking scheme for the play, 10) move your 'horse' into where he should be to attack the target area most effectively, 11) move diversionary players into position to lead defenders away, 12) move in non-diversionary players to aid the horse in his goal by blocking or leading defenders away, 13) move your quarterback into the best position to maneuver the ball to the horse, 14) route the 'horse', route the quarterback, route the diversionary players, then reroute the QB to take advantage of any diversionary players, and finally, 15) route the other players to misdirect the defense or block for the 'horse'. These fifteen steps will take you from nothing to something, but every play must be fine tuned in order to succeed.

An example of all of the above in one simple play (See The Play of the Month, Flanker Sideline):

**SOMETHING, continued on the next page**

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### TIPS, continued from the previous page

made some plays that are effective on the field, and have set up the Artificial Intelligence to evaluate the success of your plays. How do you go about putting a playbook together? (For purposes of this discussion I'm going to ignore 4th down trick plays and 2 min drills—the latter was covered by Bill Hall in the first newsletter.)

**When to call a play.** This aspect of the game depends entirely on your own individual style of coaching. If you are a conservative coach you may want to call a lot of running plays on first down. This style of play would be designed to guarantee your team of facing no worse than 2nd and 8 yard in every series—a solid position to be sure! However, by calling running plays on most first downs your team will gradually get fewer yards since the defense will learn to negate these plays through it's Artificial Intelligence. Alternatively, you may be a free wheeling kind of coach who likes to shatter the opposition with big yardage bombs. Again, however, if you continually call these plays, the defense will finally wise up and shut down your offense.

**A versatile/flexible playbook.** If you fall somewhere between the two extreme cases described above, you may be interested in my strategic approach. I'm an advocate of a "versatile" or "flexible" team playbook; that is, a playbook that contains several plays that can gain the required yardage using different gimmicks on both running and passing plays. This is especially effective if different gimmicks can be run from the same play formation since a particular defense will set up exactly the same way for the different plays, and should be susceptible to at least one of the gimmick plays. Also, I try to work the Artificial Intelligence so that there is little chance of the same gimmick play being called consecutively.

That may sound difficult, but it's not! This type of strategy is well suited towards a static playbook since it does not rely on scouting the opposition (provided you have a sound defense—more on that another time!). This is because the simulation will have several choices of plays that use different gimmicks at any given situation. Since no defense is infallible (there's always a weakness—even if it's to a QB bootleg/sneak), your offense will eventually find the plays that move the ball up the field.

So how do you go about this type of strategy? First, design 3-4 good plays that take advantage of different gimmicks to get the following yardage: 2-4, 5-10, 10-20, and greater than 20 yards. That makes between 12-16 total offensive plays (excluding 4th down situations etc). This may not sound like many plays, but it is more than enough for the simulation to sample at any given time. (You can make more plays, but the likelihood of them being sampled multiple times decreases—remember one successful play per down is all you really need). You can construct a very competent playbook from only a handful of plays e.g. 3 running and 3 passing plays, and these type of "minimalist" playbooks often do very well because the plays are tested often and rewarded frequently.

After you have made your plays set them all to equal priority (e.g. 4) for each down (except 4th down). For 1st and 2nd down yardage situations fill in all of the yardage boxes so that any play can be called (we'll change that later). For the 3rd down yardage row, mark in the yardage that you expect to gain for each individual play. (For all the plays be sure to set the position of the field according to the logistics of the diagrammed play, i.e. don't call a 30 yard pass at the goalline!)

On **first down**, let the simulation try about half of your total plays against the defense. To do this decrease the priority (e.g. to 2) for those plays you do **not** want to call. Since the plays are already set to cover any yardage situation, the effect of this Artificial Intelligence will give variety and versatility to your attack, because any yardage play (short, medium, or long) will be called on the first down. This will keep the defense out of any "rhythm" against your offense. Depending on your coaching style you can include more short or long yardage plays in this group. If you are more conservative, you can incorporate more short yardage running plays on first down; if you are more adventurous add more deep passes.

Now, on **second down** increase the Artificial Intelligence for plays more likely to succeed for the remaining yardage. Again, the best way to accomplish this, (and it's written in the manual) is to **not** call the plays under certain situations. Keep the plays set at equal priority (e.g. 4 as above) but clear the yardage boxes to avoid certain extreme plays being from being called. For example, clear the 15-25 yard boxes for most of your short yardage plays, and clear the 0-5 yard boxes for most of your long yardage plays. There is little sense in calling call a 2 yard play if there's 20 yards or more to go! This way, if you are left with 2nd and 20, the Artificial Intelligence will call plays designed to get at least five yards. But to keep the defense honest you should include a short yardage situation for 2nd and 10, and conversely, call a few long yardage situations for 2nd and short! This type of variation is essential to keep the defense off balance: an inside run can be very effective against a defense that's prepared for 2nd and long, while a long bomb may unglue a defense looking for 2nd and 2 yards to go.

Finally, for **third down** increase the Artificial Intelligence for plays designed to get the remaining yardage or better. On third down, you must become more focused on getting the remaining yards; so call your best plays for the given situation. If you remember from above, the yardage Artificial Intelligence of each group of plays was previously set for third down situations, so if you leave the priority Artificial Intelligence set at equally at 4, then the appropriate group of plays will be called at third down. If you have 3-4 plays that can get the required yards, then at least one of these should work during an offensive series. Don't be afraid to include a 5-10 yard play when you need 10-15 yards, it's surprising how a play designed to get 5 yards sometimes gets

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## TIPS, continued from the previous page

before releasing the ball (see below).

**Passer running towards LOS.** This tactic is effective for passing plays against zone coverage. As the passer (QB or RB) approaches the line of scrimmage, defenders in zone coverage move toward the player. The closer the passer gets to the line of scrimmage the more likely the defensive players will leave their zones to try to tackle that player. This leaves the deep coverage weak and allows a receiver to get open. This type of play is best used with deep passes, so get good blocking set up for your QB or RB before the pass is made. When engineered well, this play can be a “make or break play”—large gains can be made against mediocre defenses, or severe sacks taken if the defense is well prepared.

**Final thoughts.** These are just some of the gimmicks used in PMFB, and this is not a detailed list of what goes on “behind the scenes”, but more an overview of what to try in your own plays. Next time your team is handed a spanking by another team, watch carefully as their plays unfold. In your mind, isolate the players and see what each does in the play. Then, and only then, will you appreciate the gimmicks used by the other coach.

### B. Evaluating plays—reward frequently and well

Having designed your new plays, how do you set up the Artificial Intelligence so that successful plays are called most often? This may sound an obvious question, but considering that the average playbook may contain 15-20 offensive plays, and that your team will only get 60-80 offensive plays per game, the computer coach needs to find the winning combinations in a hurry! In order to find the most successful plays as quickly as possible I use a two-fold approach in the Artificial Intelligence: reward the play frequently, and reward it well. The overall result of this reward strategy is that as the game progresses, the Artificial Intelligence will quickly work the playbook into a hierarchy of plays where the most successful plays are called for each situation. Scoring may be slow in the first half as different plays are tested, but the yardage should come in the second half after the Artificial Intelligence has sampled enough plays.

**Evaluate the play every time.** When you create a new playbook the plays are set to be evaluated every two times that they are run (the default sample number is set to 2). This means that if you have a terrific running play which gains 10 yards every time (don’t we all wish!) PMFB will not increase the play’s priority until the next time the play is called. This could be a long time later if you use a large playbook. In addition, after the first increase in priority the play has to be run twice more before the next increment is added to the Artificial Intelligence. Since PMFB is a dynamic simulation where situations change constantly, I believe instant evaluation of plays is necessary to weed out

your ineffective plays, thereby giving your team a better chance of finding the winning game plan.

So, to speed up the computer’s analysis of my plays I set the sample number in the Artificial Intelligence box to 1. This means that the simulation will evaluate my play **every** time it is tried on the game. This instant evaluation of my plays rewards my effective plays immediately, which results in their more frequent useage. It also means that the simulation will be able to try a variety of plays under different situations, and to sort my playbook more quickly into a hierarchy of good plays. The overall effect is that the most effective plays are called against the defense, while the unsuccessful plays are less likely to be tried repeatedly.

It’s possible that a normally terrific play can be overlooked using this method of instant evaluation, but this usually occurs only when your other plays are successful against the defense—an enviable position to be in where your “best” play is not required to beat the opposition!

**Changing priority Artificial Intelligence.** In addition to instantly evaluating the plays, I also make sure to significantly change the priority Artificial Intelligence when a play meets or fails expectations. This is important in order to “positively reinforce” the simulation to call the good plays again, and for lowering the priority of a busted play.

For example, I have a running play with a priority of 4. A gain of 4 yards is good for this play, three yards is acceptable, but 2 yards is not getting the job done! So with the Artificial Intelligence priority is set to 4, I will increase the priority by 2 if the play gains 4 yards but decrease it by 2 if it only gets 2 yards. This way the play is rewarded well if it meets expectations and will be called again in a similar situation. Conversely, assuming I really needed those 4 yards but got stuffed by the defense, I want the Artificial Intelligence to try another play next time. Overall, If this play is successful 2 out of 3 times then I will have gained 8 yards or more, plus the Artificial Intelligence will be favorable (with a net increase of 2 in priority) to call the play again.

Changing the Artificial Intelligence more dramatically (e.g. by plus or minus 4, in the above example) will alter the play hierarchy more quickly, but can also greatly decrease the chance that a play will be sampled a second time against a susceptible defense.

I think it’s more important to challenge the defense with a small number of good plays than it is to sample a large number of plays (see below). Every play will usually gain some yards against a given defense; it’s just a matter of luck in the timing of the play calling.

One thing to bear in mind is that the play calling by the simulation is never infallible. Be prepared for some “off the wall plays” to be called in certain situations—sometimes they work and other times...

### C. Building a Playbook

OK, so now you’ve experimented with “gimmicks”,

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## **TIPS, continued from the previous page**

the pass. For example two receivers can converge in one area with one man pausing at the site of convergence. The second receiver runs through the paused man who then acts as a “blocker” in man coverage. This is an effective and legal way of creating a “pick” on a passing play.

RBs can be assigned pauses before beginning their running route. Pausing RBs causes man coverage to close in toward their man. Since the RB is usually positioned in the backfield, this creates an opportunity for the offensive linemen to trap the pursuing man coverage, giving the RB a head start once he gets the ball.

Pauses can also be assigned to linemen either for screen passes or draw plays. Pausing linemen keep the defensive line at bay without actively blocking. After the receiver/runner gets set during the pause period, the offensive line can then be activated using the continuous blocking symbol to create lanes for the receiver/runner to work through.

**Crossing receivers.** This is a similar notion to the idea of men converging with pause signals, except that the receivers cross paths without pausing in an effort to “brush off” or confuse the coverage. This gimmick works best with man coverage of receivers. The timing on these patterns is crucial and many attempts are usually needed to coordinate the receivers. Receivers may follow similar routes before breaking apart. Alternately, they may come from opposite sides of the field. Using a deep crossing pattern you can get a man open behind short zone coverage.

**Overloading zones.** While on the subject of zones, you can use several receivers lined up on one side to overload zone coverage. Receivers can either pause in their running routes, or run in divergent directions to confuse the coverage. Set passes up to cover 10, 20, 30, and 40 yard gains using this gimmick and test them against your opponent’s defensive plays to find out where the zone coverage is weakest. Remember, you can pass effectively up the middle of the field too, especially if your target receiver weaves his way through different zones.

**Linemen blocking.** You can momentarily confuse defensive linemen and LBs by using a variety of offensive blocking at the line of scrimmage. For example, a run block can be assigned to linemen on the side of a passing play to confuse LBs who are reading the linemen before dropping back to cover their zones. This may buy you a little extra time for the receiver to get open. This type of play seems to work best with receivers streaking down the weakside sideline (weak side—another gimmick, right!).

Running plays can use pass blocking **away** from the RB. (Pass blocking near the RB is not a good way to gain yardage!) This type of blocking tends to draw pass rushing defensive linemen into the offensive backfield, thus allowing the RB more breathing room from pursuing linemen.

Pass blocking can also be used (as currently allowed) to block pursuing man coverage. A receiver can start

in the backfield (or run across from one side) through the pass blocking linemen. Men covering the receiver will get trapped by the offensive linemen behind the line of scrimmage, thereby freeing the receiver. This type of play is very similar to a screen pass, except the linemen use pass blocking exclusively. Receivers can also spurt from the backfield through the pass blocking linemen in an effort to “tangle” LBs with DBs.

**Play fakes.** Both pass fakes and play action fakes work to momentarily draw defenders away from the target zone while the receiver/runner gets into position.

Play action fakes work best with the “hot” RB, so you may want to wait until the second quarter or half before exploiting this type of play. For best results have your RB move behind the line of scrimmage away from your target passing area. LBs reading RBs will follow this movement which leaves an open space to fire in your pass.

Pass fakes seem to work well almost all the time and tend to freeze DBs covering the target receiver. You can direct your pass fake to another secondary receiver (it helps in man coverage if that receiver is the “hot” receiver), before delivering the ball to the intended receiver. Alternately, you can “pump fake” to the primary receiver then drop the quarterback (QB) a few paces before passing the ball to the primary receiver. This pump fake has the same affect as a pausing receiver since the DBs usually freeze allowing the intended receiver to break from his coverage.

**Flea-flickers/Option passes.** These types of plays invariably incorporate several “gimmicks” in the one play. At their best these types of play are wonderful to watch—the interplay of the whole team is finely coordinated in order for the play to work. Expect to spend a lot of time mouse clicking to perfect these type of plays.

Flea-flickers can be used to good effect especially if your RB is “hot”. The RB takes the snap and runs with the ball with defenders pursuing. The RB then laterals the ball to the waiting QB who then passes to a receiver. The receiver’s route can incorporate pauses/zone overloading etc. to maximize the chance of getting open. The RB’s run should be made to look like just that—a running play. Linemen are in continuous blocking routes (except for those needed to protect the QB).

On the option pass, the QB dumps the ball to the RB, and right away all the offensive linemen chasing the QB in pass rush are taken from out of the defensive play. The RB then runs across the field with run blocking (another gimmick—right!) before throwing the ball to the intended receiver. Having the linemen in run blocking mode gives the RB some protection (this is the option part!) if the play is busted by a defensive player breaking into the backfield. For best accuracy on the pass the RB should pause or pass fake before throwing the ball.

Zone coverage can be disrupted by either of these plays if the passing player approaches the line of scrimmage

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# Tips For Creating Your First Offensive Plays

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by Geoff Neale, coach of the GFL5 Guild

In this article I have tried to outline some tips for rookies on how to make an effective offensive playbook, and hope that the following will give budding Sooper Bowl stars of the future a better understanding of what goes on “behind the scenes” in gaining those elusive offensive yards.

## A. Building plays–“the gimmicks”

Have you ever wondered how the other coach’s play totally bewilders your defense? For example: it’s late in the fourth quarter with your team ahead by 4 points, 2nd and 5 to go, the opposing quarterback fakes a hand-off, then drops back to deliver a bomb to a man wide open in the field. Oh my.....! TOUCHDOWN!!!! You lose! Sound familiar? How did it happen? Well, don’t feel too bad (it’s happened to us all!), the one thing to keep in mind is that every successful offensive play has what I call “the gimmick”. Every good running or passing play has one. Really! In fact, in passing plays “the gimmick” is the essential feature of the play that makes it work.

Oh sure, you say, running plays use gimmicks? The other coach just lets his running back (RB) go from the line of scrimmage and gets 5 yards every time. Where’s the gimmick in that? Well, if you look more carefully at the entire play you will find “the gimmick”. For example, does the RB line up on the strong side of the field but dive to the weak side? Does he pause before making his run, or dash out from behind a fast guard? Do the wide receivers (WRs) run backwards or sideways off the field drawing their man to man coverage with them? (Personally, I wish this were not allowed since it’s most un-like real Football –unless of course your team has a bunch of wimps for receivers!) At the line of scrimmage watch the offensive linemen. Do they draw the defensive line into the offensive backfield before the RB starts, or do they push the defensive line back giving the RB room to run? All these ploys are examples of “gimmicks” that are used to make plays more effective. Below I give some examples of gimmicks and their uses in offensive plays. It should be noted that the really effective plays often use several gimmicks in the same play.

**Weak/strong side attack.** The advantage to paying attention to strong/weak side is that defenses that stack their men to one side can be exploited by attacking the weak side of the field. It’s not always immediately apparent which side is strong, but the sure way to find out is to set up a defensive play with a linebackers (LB) in zone coverage on the strong side and look for that player on the practice field.

As mentioned above, a RB on the strong side who runs to the weak side is an effective play since the coverage is more vulnerable on the weak side, and the offensive linemen can block LBs pursuing the RB. Usually the RB makes a dive play to the weak side hoping to break free from the line of scrimmage and out-distance his pursuers.

Another play that exploits the weakside is a quick pass to a receiver sprinting up the sideline. Here a RB or WR is usually matched-up in man coverage with a slower defensive back (DB), who the receiver can usually out-run and make the catch.

In order to exploit the weak side gimmick fully, you should also make complementary plays that attack the strong side of the field e.g. using sweep or screen plays. Assuming your weak side offensive plays are successful, the stacked strong-side defensive plays will be called less often, which will then permit an overbalanced rushing attack on the strong side of the field.

**Movement away from the action.** As described in the above running play example, receivers running away from the site of action can be very effective in drawing man and zone coverage out of position. Overall, this type of gimmick works best against man coverage and LBs reading RBs. In order for this gimmick to be really effective the run/pass play should be geared towards a talented player who can get the most yardage on his own, because his team-mates (along with the defense, hopefully!) are out of position. For example there’s no point in passing the ball to a slow tight end (TE), unless he’s totally uncovered deep, since once the pass is caught the defense will catch him quickly.

On passing plays, receivers can run deep in order to fill the zones allowing a trailing receiver to become open. Alternately, they can run across the field to take man coverage with them, and open the side of the field they came from for a running or passing play.

Movement behind the line of scrimmage is important if you want to take LBs reading RBs out of the target area—either on a pass or on a running sweep. Set the backs in motion in the opposite direction to where you are targeting the pass or run and the LBs (either reading RB or in man coverage) will follow briefly in that direction, again opening the field up for your offense. This is particularly effective for quick slant passes.

**Pauses.** In the first issue of the newsletter there was a very good article on the use of pauses in offensive/defensive plays. A receiver can be given a pause at the beginning, during, or at the end his route to cause confusion in both man to man, and zone defense. Pauses at the beginning of the route allows other receivers to “occupy” zones allowing the trailing primary receiver to become open. Pauses during his route allows a fast receiver to momentarily break from man coverage to make the catch. Pauses at the end of the route serve to occupy zones and to create downfield blocking as described below.

Pauses can also be used with men **not** the target of

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## **GUNSLINGERS, continued from the previous page**

Comedians had to settle for a field goal, to trail 3-7. The Comedian defense held after the kickoff, and they drove in for a go-ahead touchdown at 9:54 in the 2nd to lead 10-7. Both team's defenses held for several exchanges, leading up to the end of the half. The 2 minute warning found the Comedians with the ball on the Gunslingers 38 yard line, first and ten to go. They drove down to the 20, but were intercepted at the 10 yard line with 1:45 to play in the half. Quarterback Stephen King promptly led the Gunners into Comedian territory on a series of short and medium passes to get within field goal range. The half ended with the score tied 10-10, after the Comedians failed to capitalize on a Gunslinger onside kick that went awry.

The Comedians held the Gunslingers after the kickoff, and drove for a touchdown with their methodical offense. The Gunners quickly answered with a 70 yard bomb to knot the score at 17. At this point, running back Eddie Murphy began to run wild, and plunged over the goaline for another Comedian touchdown with 2:52 left in the 3rd to make the score 24-17. The Comedians get the ball back and start the 4th quarter by mounting another long drive down to the Gunslingers 9 yard line, where they are forced to settle for a field goal to lead 27-17 with 12:34 remaining. The Gunslingers, not to be discouraged, launch yet another bomb for a touchdown, this one for 77 yards to pull the score to 27-24 with 10:49 remaining. The Comedians answered with another time-consuming drive, that culminated in a field goal from the 35 with 4:44 remaining, to lead 30-24. The Gunslingers throw three incomplete passes, and are forced to punt. The Comedians took possession with 4:23 remaining, but two plays later they lose 18 yards. Although they managed to gain 21 yards over the next 2 plays, they end up punting. The Gunslingers, behind by 6 points, started out at their own 26 yard line with 1:54 left in the game. They drove down the field on a creative combination of short slants and ins. From the 19 yard line, they called a wide receiver slant in that is good for 11 yards, down to the 8 yard line. The Gunslingers, behind by 6 points with no timeouts, had the ball 1st and goal at the 8 yard line with 0:11 on the clock, and the clock was running. QB Stephen King coolly led the no-huddle offense, and ran an halfback quick slant. Linebacker Jerry Lewis broke it up and stopped the clock with 0:10 left, 2nd and goal from the 8. The Gunslingers tried another wide receiver slant in that goes for the touchdown! The crowd went wild as the Gunslingers lined up for the extra point try with the score tied 30-30. The kick was good! Gunslingers took a 31-30 lead with 0:03 on the clock. The Comedians got the kickoff but had 80 yards to go with 0:01 left on the clock. QB Mel Brooks passed to Eddie Murphy, who broke several tackles, but Tom Harkin grabbed an ankle and brought him down! **GUNSLINGERS WON, 31-30!** This was an unbelievable game, that was pulled out by the Gunslinger's phenomenal 2 minute drills to end the half and the game.

Thus, the stage was set for the Sooper Bowl meet-

ing between the Assassins and the Gunslingers. Both teams arrived at Assassins Stadium for the holiday weekend game, but only one team would end up wearing Sooper Bowl rings. Before the game, the Gunslingers coach, Damien C. Alexander, proclaimed that, "this game would be won or lost with defense," and he was right.

The Gunslingers took the opening kickoff, and marched 80 yards for a touchdown in a drive that consumed 4:08. The Assassins drove to midfield, but the Gunners defense forced them to punt. The Gunners pushed out to their 47 yard line before they stalled, and punted to the Assassins. At the end of the first quarter the Gunslingers led 7-0. The Assassins came out passing, and were promptly intercepted at about midfield. The Gunslingers embarked upon an uncharacteristic eleven play drive punching into the end-zone, to take a 14-0 lead. The Assassins were forced to punt again, and it appeared as if they had held the Gunslingers, when the Gunslingers called a successful fake punt, giving them a first down at the Assassin's 33 yard line with 4:17 to play in the half. A few plays later the Gunslingers shot into the end-zone to lead 21-0. Their stingy defense got the ball back on downs, so that the offense could wrap up the first half scoring a field goal to go into the locker room with a 24-0 lead.

To start the third quarter, the Assassins pushed down to the Gunners 29 yard line, but their field goal attempt sailed wide right. On the next play, Stephen King tossed a 71 yard bomb for a touchdown to take the Gunners lead to 31-0. The parsimonious Gunners defense held again, and their offense drove down to the 12 yard line where their field goal made the score 34-0 at the end of the 3rd quarter.

The fourth quarter opened in the culmination of another long Gunslingers touchdown drive to make the score 41-0. The ball changed possession on downs several times until the Gunners got within field goal range with 4:18 remaining in the contest to take a 44-0 lead. The Assassins then broke a long screen pass into Gunslingers territory, where they had to settle for a field goal with 2:23 remaining, to trail 44-3. The Assassin's onside kick was not successful, but the their defense intercepted the Gunslingers on the next play. They were held on downs, and the Gunslingers mercifully ran out the clock. The game ball went to the Gunslinger defense which held an explosive Assassin offense to 3 points. The Gunslingers carried coach Damien Alexander off the field on their shoulders, and claimed their Sooper Bowl rings on the strength of an impressive 44-3 victory over the Assassins.

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Volume 1, Number 3

## Gunslingers Roll Through AOFL Playoffs, Assassins For Sooper Bowl Crown

by Ian C. Klimon, coach of the AOFL mArLeYs and the GFL Tigers and Pat Fitzgerald, coach of the AOFL Wraiths

The AOFL Gunslingers rolled through the playoffs to take the AOFL Season6 Sooper Bowl crown in style with a 44-3 victory over the Conference A Champion Assassins. The Gunslingers finished the regular season 8-2, their two losses coming at the hands of the Pelicans in Week #3 and the mArLeYs in Week #6. After their loss in Week #6, the Gunslingers offense exploded in the final four games of the regular season for an average 62 points per game, while their defense gave up only 18 points per game. And while their offense was toned down to 36.2 points per game in the playoffs, their defense continued its winning ways giving up only 18.5 points per game throughout the playoffs.

In the 1st Round of the Playoffs, the Gunslingers defeated the Germans 36-20, the Flunkies survived a 41-35 slugfest with the mArLeYs, the Impalers topped the Falcons 26-7, and the Whiteskins rolled through the Hawks 52-16.

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The four regular season division champions, the Wraiths, Assassins, Comedians and Pelicans all had a bye through the 1st Round. This extra week of rest and preparation proved to be beneficial in the 2nd Round, as three of the four division champs prevailed. The underdog Gunslingers flew into Pelican Stadium in New Jersey and walked away with a 34-21 victory over the division champs and a shot at the Comedians who had destroyed the Flunkies 66-20 earlier in the day. The Assassins steamrolled the Whiteskins 47-6, while the Wraiths calmly downed the upstart Impalers 20-7.

The Assassins played the Wraiths for the Conference A Championship, and the Gunslingers played the Comedians for the Conference B Championship. The Assassins caught the Wraiths unawares with a new flea-flicker bomb. The bomb accounted for 48 of the Assassin's 62 points in their 62-31 victory over the previously undefeated Wraiths. Over in Conference B, the game was hotly contested. The Gunslingers unveiled their new SIDESPLITTER missile, and at first, it appeared to be a dud. On their first possession, the Gunslingers were left with a 3rd and long after several sacks, but they connected for a 78 yard touch-down bomb with 10:39 in the first to lead by 7. Taking the ensuing kickoff, the Comedians ground out a drive to the Gunners goalline, but the Gunslinger defense held and the

**GUNSLINGERS, continued on the next page**

### Gunslingers AOFL Season6 Results

Week 1 Gunslingers 55	@ mArLeYs 24	W
Week 2 Gunslingers 31	@ Jesters 10	W
Week 3 Gunslingers 24	@ Pelicans 38	L
Week 4 Gunslingers 53	@ Arboreals 14	W
Week 5 Apocalypse 0	@ Gunslingers 37	W
Week 6 mArLeYs 44	@ Gunslingers 7	L
Week 7 Jesters 24	@ Gunslingers 31	W
Week 8 Arboreals 0	@ Gunslingers 97	W
Week 9 Pelicans 28	@ Gunslingers 63	W
Week 10 Gunslingers 58	@ S. Torpedoes 20	W

### PLAYOFFS

(1st Round)

Week 11 Germans 20	@ Gunslingers 36	W
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(2nd Round)

Week 12 Gunslingers 34	@ Pelicans 21	W
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(Conference Championship)

Week 13 Gunslingers 31	@ Comedians 30	W
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(Sooper Bowl)

Week 14 Gunslingers 44	@ Assassins 3	W
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Final Record: 12-2 Sooper Bowl Champions